

House of the Seasons  
(Benjamin H. Epperson House)  
409 South Alley Street, northwest corner  
of the intersection of Alley and Delta Streets  
Jefferson  
Marion County  
Texas

HABS No. TEX-142

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HOUSE OF THE SEASONS  
(BENJAMIN H. EPPERSON HOUSE)

Location: 409 South Alley Street, northwest corner of the intersection of Alley and Delta Streets, Jefferson, Marion County, Texas

Present Owner and Occupant: Dr. and Mrs. Walter S. McNutt

Present Use: Residence

Statement of Significance: The house gets its name from the cupola which is glazed with different colors of glass on the four sides--on the north, blue; the east, red; the south, green; and the west, amber--each representing a season of the year. This is one of the most interesting nineteenth century houses in northeast Texas and one of the few examples of the Italianate style in the region.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Sometime between 1871 when the property for the building was purchased and 1878 when the original owner died. It is believed to have been constructed in 1872.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners; legal description of property: Lots 7 and 8, Block P of Alley Addition. Benjamin H. Epperson purchased the land from James H. Rogers and wife in the spring of 1871 (Marion County Deed Book 6, p. 564). Benjamin H. Epperson died in 1878 (copy of will in abstract in present owner's possession). In 1883, Mrs. N. A. Epperson, Benjamin's widow, received a deed from R. B. Epperson, Executor of the Estate (Marion County Deed Book Q, p. 370). The property was deeded to M. T. Glass in 1906 (Marion County Deed Book H-1, p. 17). In 1941, Dr. and Mrs. Walter S. McNutt became the third owners of the property (Marion County Deed Book 121, p. 142).

4. Alterations and additions: The original kitchen and servants' quarters, which was separated from the main building by a breezeway, has been completely remodeled. Also, the breezeway has been filled to make an enclosed connection between the original kitchen and main building.

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Building:

Benjamin H. Epperson was a prominent lawyer, statesman and developer of railroads of northeast Texas.

C. Sources of Information:

Abstract on the property which is in the present owner's possession.

Marion County Deed Books, Marion County Courthouse, Jefferson, Texas.

McNutt, Dr. Walter S. Benjamin H. Epperson and The House of the Seasons He Built in Texas. Jefferson, Texas: Four States Publishing House, 1957.

This house and its original owner are the subjects of a historical novel by the present owner.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This house is one of the few in this region in the Italian Villa mode. The drawing room and openings in the floors below the cupola feature some fine frescoes. The bookcabinets in the study and several marble fireplaces are also noteworthy.
2. Condition of fabric: Generally good. The front portico, however, is in need of repair.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The main house is 50'-6 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (five-bay front) x 47'-5 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". The servants' quarters wing is 17'-2" by 27'-5". On the front of the house, the portico is 11'-1" by 50'-6 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".
2. Foundations: Brick piers.
3. Wall construction: Walls are sawn-timber frame finished with  $\frac{1}{2}$ " by 6" clapboards.

4. Porches and balconies: The front (east) portico has four wooden columns in the Corinthian order. The deck has a balustrade composed of heavy turned balusters and rectangular posts, corresponding to the columns below, which are topped by carved urns. There is a similar balustrade around the cupola. A small balcony on the south is supported by one column in the Corinthian order and has a wooden lattice railing. Porches on the west are supported by simple, rectangular, wooden columns.
5. Chimneys: There are three brick chimneys, plastered on the interior. All are situated in the interior of the house.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: East (front) door has segmental arched opening, large glass transom with circular motif in center, sidelights, and double doors with glass and wooden panels. South doorway of main building is surmounted by a simple pediment, has a seven-light transom and one narrow sidelight on each side of a single four-panel door. West doorway has double paneled doors with four lights in a heavily molded opening. North door is a recent addition.
  - b. Windows: East first-floor windows are nine-over-nine double-hung, wooden sash; second-floor windows are wooden double-hung sash in round-arched openings. South first-floor windows are nine-over-six double-hung, wooden sash; second floor has six-over-six sash; the bay has two four-over-four double-hung windows with arched heads at each floor. North first floor has nine-over-six sash; second floor has six-over-six sash, all wooden, double-hung. Cupola windows are double-hung wooden sash in round-arched openings.
7. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: The main part of the house has a hipped roof with sheet-metal roofing. The attached building which was formerly the kitchen has a gambrel roof; asphalt shingles cover the original wood shingles.
  - b. Cornice: Constructed from wood with crown and bed moldings.

- c. Cupola: Square, centered on the roof. It has three colored glass windows on each side. Each of the four sides has a different colored glass representing a season of the year. The windows are arched with a circular motif in the glazing. One window is hinged to give access to the captain's walk which surrounds the cupola. The cupola has a bracketed cornice and a concave pyramidal roof surmounted by a finial.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: Main building has a central hall with dining room and bedroom on the north and drawing room and study on the south with stairhall between them. The kitchen wing is now attached at the northwest corner. Second floor has a central hall with two bedrooms on either side. A round well is open from the center of the central hall to the cupola.
2. Stairways: Stairways are located on the south side of the main hall, between the drawing room and study on the first floor and between two bedrooms on the second floor. Stairway from first to second floor has a double run with winders making the transition in change of direction. From the second floor to the cupola, there is one long straight run and one short straight run, slightly offset, with low headroom. Stairways have octagonal newels and turned balusters. Stringers have heavy moldings. At first and second floors, the stairway opening is trimmed by a coupled arch.
3. Flooring: Vertical-grain pine, approximately 5" wide was used throughout.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster, painted throughout. The dome which opens into the cupola is frescoed. In the drawing room there is a frescoed medallion in the center of the room and a frescoed band at the edges of the ceiling.
5. Doors: Interior doors are four-panel.
6. Special decorative features, trim: The trim is wood throughout. Doors and windows have wide, molded casings. Heavy wooden bases throughout the house are 14" high and have a molded top and a quarter-round shoemold.

On the east wall of the study are built-in bookcases made of pine and walnut with glazed doors. They have Classical detailing, including a heavy dentilled cornice and Corinthian pilasters.

7. Hardware: Iron butts, four per door in most cases. Iron latch with porcelain door knobs.
8. Lighting: All of the original gas light fixtures remain. They are three-jet fixtures with ornamentation and etched-glass globes in most places. The drawing room fixture is suspended from the center of a fresco. Fuel was obtained from the city gas system.
9. Heating: Gas unit heaters. There are four Italian-marble fireplaces on the first floor. There are also four fireplaces on the second floor with wooden trim. The openings of all fireplaces have been filled and plastered.

D. Site and Surroundings:

1. General setting and orientation: On the east and south sides, the ground rises abruptly from the streets for about 5'. The ground then slopes gently to the west. The front door faces east. There is one 8' wide concrete walk to this entrance.
2. Outbuildings: There is a wrought-iron fence, manufactured by the Stewart Iron Works, Cincinnati, Ohio, on the east and part of the west side of the property. There is one outbuilding which is insignificant architecturally. This building is located to the west side of the house.
3. Landscaping: Significant landscape features consist of several large trees on the south and a large magnolia tree on the northeast.

Prepared by Willard B. Robinson, AIA  
Supervisory Architect, HABS  
National Park Service  
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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were made in 1966 during a summer project financed by the National Park Service to record 16 structures in Jefferson and the nearby area. The summer recording team received the cooperation of numerous citizens and organizations who provided office space, lodgings, board, and research assistance. Among the cooperators were the Dan Lester Drilling Company, the Excelsior Hotel, Mrs. A. K. Payne, the Jessie Allen Wise Garden Club, and the Marion County Chamber of Commerce.

The project was under the direction of A. Lewis Koue of the Historic American Buildings Survey's Western Office in San Francisco. Supervisor of the recording team was Willard B. Robinson, AIA, of Texas Technological College. The team was composed of student architects David L. Bouse of the University of Nebraska, Bob J. Fong of the University of Idaho, Donald Quackenbush of Washington State University, and Robert M. Swanson of the University of Texas. Photographs were made by National Park Service Photographer, Jack E. Boucher.